Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application. Applicant has submitted a new complete claim set showing marked up claims with insertions indicated by underlining and deletions indicated by strikeouts and/or double bracketing.

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) An update service node having an application programming interface for administering the distribution of software updates on the update service node, the application programming interface comprising:

an update store for storing software updates;

an update web service through which the update service node obtains software updates from a parent update service node over a communication network, and through which the update service node distributes software updates to child update service nodes over the communication network; and

an administration application programming interface (API) through which an administrator defines distribution groups including an evaluation group and a general group, and establishes distribution rules associated with each group, the distribution rules specifying controls the distribution of software updates to child update service nodes and client computers included in the respective distribution groups, the rules associated with the evaluation group specifying immediate distribution to the evaluation group, the rules associated with the general group specifying withholding distribution until authorization is received based on the evaluation, wherein the administration API is

an object exposing a plurality of interface calls through which the administrator establishes said rules.

2.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 1, wherein the administration API exposes a get configuration interface call which returns a configuration interface object for reading and writing software update administration configuration values to the update service node.

3.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 2, wherein the configuration interface object is an IConfiguration interface object.

4.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 2, wherein the administration API exposes a get subscription interface call which returns a subscription interface object corresponding to a subscription identifier passed to the get subscription interface call.

5.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 4, wherein the subscription interface object is an ISubscription interface object.

6.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 4, wherein the administration API exposes a get subscriptions interface call which returns a subscription collection interface object defined on the update service node.

7.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 4, wherein the administration API exposes a get update interface call which returns a update interface object corresponding to an update identifier passed in the get update interface call.

8.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 7, wherein the update interface object is an IUpdate interface object.

9.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 7, wherein the administration API exposes a get updates interface call which returns an update collection object containing update interface objects corresponding to values passed in the get updates interface call.

10.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 9, wherein the values passed to the get updates interface call include a deployed state object and an exclude hidden updates Boolean value.

11.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 9, wherein the administration API exposes a get computer interface call which returns an client computer object corresponding to the a client computer associated with the update service node and that was identified in the get computer interface call.

12.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 11, wherein the client computer object is an IComputer object.

13.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 11, wherein the administration API exposes a get computers interface call which returns a computer collection object including client computer objects corresponding to client computers associated with the update service node.

14.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 13, wherein the administration API exposes a get group interface call which returns an target group object that was identified in the get group interface call.

15.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 14, wherein the administration API exposes a get groups interface call which returns a target group collection object including target group objects corresponding to target groups on the update service node.

16.   (Original) The update service node of Claim 1, wherein the administration API is an IUpdateServer interface object.

17.   (Cancelled)

18.   (Currently Amended) A software update distribution system for distributing software updates, the software update distribution system comprising:

an update service node; and

an administration application programming interface (API) associated with the update service node, wherein the administration API is an interface object exposing a plurality of interface calls for controlling the distribution of software updates, the administration API including:

a create computer target group through which at least two target groups are defined including an all-computers group and an evaluation target group for evaluating software updates prior to distribution to the all-computers group;

a get configuration interface call which returns a configuration interface object for reading and writing software update administration configuration values to the update service node;

a get subscription interface call which returns a subscription interface object defined on the update service node;

a get update interface call which returns a<u>n</u> update interface object corresponding to an update identifier passed in the get update interface call;

a get updates interface call which returns an update collection object containing update interface objects corresponding to values passed in the get updates interface call;

a get computer interface call which returns [[an]] <u>a</u> client computer object corresponding to ~~the~~ a client computer associated with the update service node and that was identified in the get computer interface call;

a get computers interface call which returns a computer collection object including client computer objects corresponding to client computers associated with the update service node;

a get group interface call which returns [[an]] a target group object that was identified in the get group interface call; and

a get groups interface call which returns a target group collection object including target group objects corresponding to target groups on the update service node.

19. (New) A computer-implemented method for distributing software updates to computing devices in a network, the method comprising:

through an application programming interface:

defining a general group of computing devices and an evaluation group of computing devices, each of the general group of computing devices and the evaluation group of computing devices comprising a respective child update service node configured to distribute software updates to one or more client computing devices of the group;

associating software update distribution rules with each of the general group and the evaluation group;

receiving a software update; and

based on the software update distribution rules:

immediately distributing the software update to the child update service node of the evaluation group, the child update service node of the evaluation group being configured to distribute the software update to client computing devices of the evaluation group for evaluation of the software update;

withholding the software update from the general group of computing devices until the software update is authorized for distribution to the general group of computing devices based on the evaluation of the software update; and

after the software update has been evaluated by the evaluation group, authorizing distribution of the software update to the general group of client computing devices.

20. (New) The update service node of Claim 19, further comprising:

requesting a product update catalog listing software updates available for distribution; and

selecting one or more software updates from the product update catalog.